

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing access to a network system, wherein the network system includes a plurality of access points coupled to a network, the method comprising:

a first access point receiving identification information from a portable computing device, wherein the identification information indicates a wireless service provider of a plurality of possible wireless service providers;

the first access point determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;

the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device; and
providing network access to the portable computing device through the wireless service provider determined in said determining.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said first access point is operable to accommodate subscribers of each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising:
the first access point recognizing a System ID (SID) of a plurality of possible SIDs, wherein each of the plurality of possible SIDs is associated with a respective one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising:
the first access point maintaining associations between the plurality of possible SIDs and the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising:
the first access point maintaining associations between the plurality of possible SIDs and a plurality of active subscribers.

6. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising:
the first access point broadcasting a plurality of possible SIDs, wherein each of the plurality of possible SIDs is associated with a respective one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said first access point is operable to function as a wireless service provider access point for each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.
8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said first access point comprises computer software which implements a plurality of virtual access points, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points corresponds to one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers, and wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points provides network access services to the corresponding wireless service provider.
9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points provides access point functionality implemented in software, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points appears as a physical access point to the portable computing device.
10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein each virtual access point (AP) of the plurality of virtual access points executes a wireless protocol stack.
11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the wireless protocol stack comprises an IEEE 802.11 wireless protocol stack.
12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein each virtual access point (AP) of the plurality of virtual access points includes an Extended Service Set ID (ESSID), and wherein each ESSID corresponds to one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said providing network access comprises providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined wireless service provider.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the network system is useable by subscribers of each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
maintaining and storing a usage amount by the portable computing device;
wherein the determined wireless service provider charges for access by the portable computing device to the network.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the network system includes a memory medium which stores a data structure comprising a list of identification information and a corresponding list of the plurality of possible wireless service providers; and

wherein said determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device includes accessing the memory medium and using the received identification information to determine the wireless service provider.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the network system includes a memory medium which stores a data structure comprising a list of identification information, a corresponding list of the plurality of possible wireless service providers, and associated methods for providing data to the respective plurality of possible wireless service providers; and

wherein said determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device includes accessing the memory medium, using the received identification information to determine the wireless service provider, and using an associated method for providing the data to the wireless service provider.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the data structure stores a destination address indicating a destination specified by the wireless service provider; and

wherein said providing the data comprises providing the data to the destination specified by the wireless service provider.

19. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of access points are maintained by a first wireless service provider; and

wherein the identification information indicates a second wireless service provider.

20. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identification information comprises a System ID, wherein the System ID uniquely identifies the wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

21. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identification information comprises an Extended Service Set ID (ESSID), wherein the ESSID uniquely identifies the wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

22. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

the first access point receiving identification information from a portable computing device, wherein the identification information indicates a first wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers;

determining the first wireless service provider for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;

the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device;

providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination associated with the first wireless service provider;

the first access point receiving identification information from a portable computing device, wherein the identification information indicates a second wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers;

determining the second wireless service provider for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;
the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device; and
providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination associated with the second wireless service provider.

23. (Original) The method of claim 1,
wherein the plurality of access points are arranged at known locations in a geographic region, the method further comprising:
the first access point providing geographic location information indicating a known geographic location of the portable computing device;
wherein said providing network access comprises selectively providing network access to the portable computing device based on the known geographic location of the portable computing device.

24. (Original) The method of claim 1,
wherein the plurality of access points are arranged at known locations in a geographic region, the method further comprising:
the first access point providing geographic location information indicating a known geographic location of the portable computing device; and
determining an access level for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;
wherein said providing network access comprises selectively providing network access to the portable computing device based on the known geographic location of the portable computing device and the determined access level.

25. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining an access level for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;
the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device; and

providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined access level.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein said providing the data comprises:

providing the data to one or more resources on the network to allow the portable computing device access to the one or more resources on the network if the access level is a first access level; and

providing the data to a destination for external access out of the network to only allow the portable computing device access to other networks if the access level is a second access level;

wherein, if the access level is the second access level, the data is not provided to the one or more resources on the network.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26, further comprising:

assigning a wireless communication channel for communication between the first access point and the portable computing device.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the first access point assigns the wireless communication channel for communication between the first access point and the portable computing device.

29. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein said assigning comprises assigning the wireless communication channel based on one or more of:

the identification information received from the portable computing device,
the determined wireless service provider, or

a determined access level for the portable computing device, wherein said determined access level is determined after receiving the identification information.

30. (Currently Amended) A network system, comprising:

a network; and

a plurality of access points coupled to the network, wherein each of the plurality of access points is operable to communicate with a portable computing device, wherein each of the plurality of access points is configured to receive identification information from the portable computing device indicating a wireless service provider of a plurality of possible wireless service providers;

wherein each of the plurality of access points is operable to determine the wireless service provider indicated in the identification information;

wherein network access is provided to the portable computing device through a first access point of the plurality of access points and the determined wireless service provider.

31. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein said first access point is operable to accommodate subscribers of each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

32. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 31, ~~further comprising:~~
wherein the first access point is operable to ~~recognizing~~ recognize a System ID (SID) of a plurality of possible SIDs, wherein each of the plurality of possible SIDs is associated with a respective one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

33. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 32, ~~further comprising:~~
wherein the first access point is operable to ~~maintaining~~ maintain associations between the plurality of possible SIDs and the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

34. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 32, ~~further comprising:~~
wherein the first access point is operable to ~~maintaining~~ maintain associations between the plurality of possible SIDs and a plurality of active subscribers.

35. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 31, ~~further comprising:~~

wherein the first access point is operable to ~~broadcasting~~ broadcast a plurality of possible SIDs, wherein each of the plurality of possible SIDs is associated with a respective one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

36. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein said first access point is operable to function as a wireless service provider access point for each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

37. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 30, wherein at least one of said plurality of access points comprises computer software which implements a plurality of virtual access points, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points corresponds to one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers, and wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points provides network access services to the corresponding wireless service provider.

38. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 37, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points provides access point functionality implemented in software, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points appears as a physical access point to the portable computing device.

39. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 37, wherein each virtual access point (AP) of the plurality of virtual access points executes a wireless protocol stack.

40. (Original) The network system of claim 39, wherein the wireless protocol stack comprises an IEEE 802.11 protocol stack.

41. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 37, wherein each virtual access point (AP) of the plurality of virtual access points includes an Extended Service Set ID (ESSID), and wherein each ESSID corresponds to one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

42. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein each of the plurality of access points is operable to provide data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined wireless service provider.

43. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein the network system is useable by subscribers of each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

44. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein the determined wireless service provider charges for access by the portable computing device to the network.

45. (Original) The network system of claim 30, further comprising:
a memory medium coupled to the network which stores a data structure comprising a list of identification information and a corresponding list of the plurality of possible wireless service providers;

wherein, in determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device, each of the plurality of access points is operable to access the memory medium and use the received identification information to determine the wireless service provider.

46. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 45, wherein the memory medium is comprised in one or more of the plurality of access points.

47. (Original) The network system of claim 30, further comprising:
a memory medium coupled to the network which stores a data structure comprising a list of wireless service provider identification information, a corresponding list of the plurality of possible wireless service providers, and associated methods for providing data to the respective plurality of possible wireless service providers;

wherein, in determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device, each of the plurality of access points is operable to access the memory medium, use the received wireless service provider identification information to determine the

wireless service provider, and use an associated method for providing the data to the determined wireless service provider.

48. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 47, wherein the memory medium is comprised in one or more of the plurality of access points.

49. (Original) The network system of claim 47,
wherein the data structure stores a destination address indicating a destination specified by the determined wireless service provider; and
wherein each of the plurality of access points is operable to provide the data to the destination specified by the determined wireless service provider.

50. (Original) The network system of claim 49, wherein the plurality of access points are maintained by a first wireless service provider; and
wherein the identification information indicates a second wireless service provider.

51. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein the identification information comprises a System ID, and wherein the System ID uniquely identifies a wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

52. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein the identification information comprises an Extended Service Set ID (ESSID), wherein the ESSID uniquely identifies the wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

53. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 30, further comprising:
[[a]] the portable computing device operated by a user, wherein the portable computing device includes the identification information, wherein the identification information indicates a first wireless service provider of the plurality of wireless service providers;

wherein, when ~~[[a]]~~ the first access point of the plurality of access points receives the identification information from the portable computing device, the first access point is operable to determine the first wireless service provider; and

wherein the first access point is operable to provide data received from the portable computing device according to the first wireless service provider.

54. (Original) The network system of claim 30, further comprising:

one or more network devices coupled to the network, wherein each of the one or more network devices corresponds to one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers;

wherein each of the plurality of access points is operable to provide data received from the portable computing device to a network device corresponding to the determined wireless service provider.

55. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 30, wherein each of the plurality of access points is operable to provide the data to ~~[[the]]~~ a destination in a secure manner.

56. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein the plurality of access points are arranged at known locations in a geographic region, wherein each access point is operable to provide geographic location information indicating a known geographic location of the portable computing device; and

wherein network access is selectively provided to the portable computing device based on the known geographic location of the portable computing device.

57. (Currently Amended) The network system of claim 30,

wherein the plurality of access points are arranged at known locations in a geographic region, ~~the method further comprising:~~

wherein the first access point is operable to ~~providing~~ provide geographic location information indicating a known geographic location of the portable computing device; and

~~determining an access level for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;~~

wherein, in [[said]] providing network access, comprises determining an access level for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information and selectively providing network access to the portable computing device based on the known geographic location of the portable computing device and the determined access level.

58. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein one or more of the plurality of access points are operable to:

determine an access level for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information; and

provide data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined access level.

59. (Original) The network system of claim 58, wherein, in providing the data, said one or more of the plurality of access points are operable to:

provide the data to one or more resources on the network to allow the portable computing device access to the one or more resources on the network if the access level is a first access level; and

provide the data to a destination for external access out of the network to only allow the portable computing device access to other networks if the access level is a second access level;

wherein, if the access level is the second access level, the data is not provided to the one or more resources on the network.

60. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein each of the access points is operable to assign a wireless communication channel for communication between the first access point and the portable computing device.

61. (Original) The network system of claim 30, wherein one or more of the access points are operable to assign the wireless communication channel based on one or more of:

the identification information received from the portable computing device,

the determined wireless service provider, or

a determined access level for the portable computing device, wherein said access level is determined by one of said one or more of the access points after receiving the identification information.

62. (Currently Amended) A method for providing roaming features on a wireless network system, wherein the wireless network system includes a plurality of access points coupled to a network, the method comprising:

a first access point of the plurality of access points receiving identification information from a portable computing device in a wireless manner, wherein the identification information indicates a wireless service provider of a plurality of possible wireless service providers;

the first access point determining a wireless service provider for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;

the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device in a wireless manner; and

providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined wireless service provider.

63. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein said first access point is operable to accommodate subscribers of each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

64. (Original) The method of claim 63, further comprising:

the first access point recognizing a System ID (SID) of a plurality of possible SIDs, wherein each of the plurality of possible SIDs is associated with a respective one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

65. (Original) The method of claim 64, further comprising:
the first access point maintaining associations between the plurality of possible SIDs and the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

66. (Original) The method of claim 64, further comprising:
the first access point maintaining associations between the plurality of possible SIDs and a plurality of active subscribers.

67. (Original) The method of claim 63, further comprising:
the first access point broadcasting a plurality of possible SIDs, wherein each of the plurality of possible SIDs is associated with a respective one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

68. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein said first access point is operable to function as a wireless service provider access point for each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

69. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62, wherein said first access point comprises computer software which implements a plurality of virtual access points, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points corresponds to one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers, and wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points provides network access services to the corresponding wireless service provider.

70. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 69, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points provides access point functionality implemented in software, wherein each virtual access point of the plurality of virtual access points appears as a physical access point to the portable computing device.

71. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 69, wherein each virtual access point (AP) of the plurality of virtual access points executes a wireless protocol stack.

72. (Original) The method of claim 71, wherein the wireless protocol stack comprises an IEEE 802.11 wireless protocol stack.

73. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 69, wherein each virtual access point (AP) of the plurality of virtual access points includes an Extended Service Set ID (ESSID), and wherein each ESSID corresponds to one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

74. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein the wireless network system is a distributed wireless network system.

[[77]]75. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62, wherein the network system is useable by subscribers of each of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

76. (Original) The method of claim 62, further comprising:
maintaining and storing a usage amount by the portable computing device;
wherein the determined wireless service provider charges for access by the portable computing device to the network.

77. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein the network system includes a memory medium which stores a data structure comprising a list of identification information and a corresponding list of the plurality of possible wireless service providers; and

wherein said determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device includes accessing the memory medium and using the received identification information to determine the wireless service provider.

78. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein the plurality of access points are maintained by a first wireless service provider; and

wherein the identification information indicates a second wireless service provider.

79. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein the identification information comprises a System ID, wherein the System ID uniquely identifies the wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

80. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein the identification information comprises an Extended Service Set ID (ESSID), wherein the ESSID uniquely identifies the wireless service provider of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

81. (Original) The method of claim 62,
wherein the plurality of access points are arranged at known locations in a geographic region, the method further comprising:
the first access point providing geographic location information indicating a known geographic location of the portable computing device;
wherein said providing network access comprises selectively providing network access to the portable computing device based on the known geographic location of the portable computing device.

82. (Original) The method of claim 62,
wherein the plurality of access points are arranged at known locations in a geographic region, the method further comprising:
the first access point providing geographic location information indicating a known geographic location of the portable computing device; and
determining an access level for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;

wherein said providing network access comprises selectively providing network access to the portable computing device based on the known geographic location of the portable computing device and the determined access level.

83. (Original) The method of claim 62, further comprising:
determining an access level for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;
the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device; and
providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined access level.

84. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the network system includes a memory medium which stores a data structure comprising a list of wireless service provider identification information, a corresponding list of the plurality of possible wireless service providers, and associated destinations for providing data to the respective plurality of possible wireless service providers; and

wherein said determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device includes accessing the memory medium and using the received identification information to determine the wireless service provider and an associated destination for providing data to the wireless service provider determined in said determining.

85. (New) The method of claim 84, wherein the memory medium is comprised in one or more of the plurality of access points.

86. (New) The method of claim 84, wherein the data structure further comprises associated methods for providing data to the respective plurality of possible wireless service providers; and

wherein said determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device includes accessing the memory medium and using the received identification information to determine the wireless service provider and an associated method for providing data to the destination.

87. (New) The method of claim 86, wherein the memory medium is comprised in one or more of the plurality of access points.

88. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
the first access point concurrently using a plurality of radio frequency (RF) channels for communicating with one or more portable computing devices.

89. (New) The method of claim 88, wherein a first RF channel of the plurality of RF channels and a second RF of the plurality of RF channels are non-overlapping RF channels.

90. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein one or more of the plurality of possible SIDs each indicate one or more VLANs.

91. (New) The method of claim 90, further comprising:
determining at least one VLAN indicated by the recognized SID;
wherein said providing includes using the at least one VLAN to communicate the received data from the portable computing device to the determined wireless service provider.

92. (New) The method of claim 3,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Service Set IDs (SSIDs).

93. (New) The method of claim 3,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Basic Service Set IDs (BSSIDs).

94. (New) The method of claim 93,

wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise at least one media access control (MAC) ID.

95. (New) The method of claim 93,
wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise a plurality of media access control (MAC) IDs; and

wherein a first MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs is different from a second MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs.

96. (New) The method of claim 93,
wherein a first BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs is different from a second BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs.

97. (New) The method of claim 3,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Extended Service Set IDs (ESSIDs).

98. (New) The method of claim 6,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Service Set IDs (SSIDs).

99. (New) The method of claim 16, wherein the memory medium is comprised in one or more of the plurality access points.

100. (New) The network system of claim 30, wherein the network is operable to support IEEE 802.1p.

101. (New) The network system of claim 30, wherein the network is operable to enforce a predefined quality of service (QoS) metric to a virtual port within the network.

102. (New) The network system of claim 30, further comprising:

at least one of the plurality of access points is operable to concurrently use a plurality of radio frequency (RF) channels for communicating with one or more portable computing devices.

103. (New) The network system of claim 102, wherein a first RF channel of the plurality of RF channels and a second RF of the plurality of RF channels are non-overlapping RF channels.

104. (New) The network system of claim 32, wherein at least a subset of the SIDs each indicate one or more VLANs.

105. (New) The network system of claim 104,
wherein the first access point is operable to determine at least one VLAN indicated by the SID; and

wherein the first access point is operable to transmit data received from the portable computing device to the network, wherein, in transmitting the data received from the portable computing device to the network, includes using the at least one VLAN.

106. (New) The network system of claim 32,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Service Set IDs (SSIDs).

107. (New) The network system of claim 32,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Basic Service Set IDs (BSSIDs).

108. (New) The network system of claim 107,
wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise at least one media access control (MAC) ID.

109. (New) The network system of claim 107,

wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise a plurality of media access control (MAC) IDs; and

wherein a first MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs is different from a second MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs.

110. (New) The network system of claim 107,

wherein a first BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs is different from a second BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs.

111. (New) The network system of claim 32,

wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Extended Service Set IDs (ESSIDs).

112. (New) The network system of claim 35,

wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Service Set IDs (SSIDs).

113. (New) The method of claim 62, further comprising:

the first access point concurrently using a plurality of radio frequency (RF) channels for communicating with one or more portable computing devices.

114. (New) The method of claim 113, wherein a first RF channel of the plurality of RF channels and a second RF of the plurality of RF channels are non-overlapping RF channels.

115. (New) The method of claim 62, wherein the network system includes a memory medium which stores a data structure comprising a list of wireless service provider identification information, a corresponding list of the plurality of possible wireless service providers, and associated methods for providing data to the respective plurality of possible wireless service providers;

wherein said determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device includes accessing the memory medium and using the received identification information to determine the wireless service provider and an associated method for providing the data to the destination.

116. (New) The method of claim 115, wherein the memory medium is comprised in one or more of the plurality of access points.

117. (New) The method of claim 64,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Service Set IDs (SSIDs).

118. (New) The method of claim 64,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Basic Service Set IDs (BSSIDs).

119. (New) The method of claim 118,
wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise at least one media access control (MAC) ID.

120. (New) The method of claim 118,
wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise a plurality of media access control (MAC) IDs; and
wherein a first MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs is different from a second MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs.

121. (New) The method of claim 118,
wherein a first BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs is different from a second BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs.

122. (New) The method of claim 64,

wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Extended Service Set IDs (ESSIDs).

123. (New) The method of claim 77, wherein the memory medium is comprised in one or more of the plurality of access points.

124. (New) A method for providing access to a network system, wherein the network system includes a plurality of access points coupled to a network, the method comprising:

a first access point receiving identification information from a portable computing device, wherein the portable computing device and the first access point communicate using wireless Ethernet (IEEE 802.11), wherein the identification information indicates a wireless service provider of a plurality of possible wireless service providers, wherein the identification information includes a wireless Ethernet service set identification (SSID), wherein the first access point is operable to concurrently use a plurality of wireless Ethernet service set identifications (SSIDs), wherein the first access point is operable to use each SSID of the plurality of SSIDs to communicate with one or more portable computing devices;

determining the wireless service provider for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;

the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device; and

providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined the wireless service provider.

125. (New) The method of claim 124,

wherein the plurality of SSIDs include at least two basic service set IDs (BSSIDs).

126. (New) The method of claim 125,

wherein the at least two BSSIDs comprises at least two media access control (MAC) IDs.

127. (New) The method of claim 126,
wherein the at least two MAC IDs are the same.

128. (New) The method of claim 124,
wherein the plurality of SSIDs include at least two extended service set IDs
(ESSIDs).

129. (New) The method of claim 124, further comprising:
the first access point broadcasting at least two of the plurality of wireless Ethernet
service set identifications (SSIDs).

130. (New) The method of claim 129, wherein said broadcasting includes a
beacon format.

131. (New) A carrier medium comprising program instructions for providing
network access in a distributed network system, wherein the distributed network system
comprises a plurality of access points, wherein the program instructions are executable by
a first access point of the plurality of access points to:

receive identification information from a portable computing device, wherein the
identification information is received in a wireless manner, wherein the identification
information indicates a wireless service provider of a plurality of possible wireless
service providers;

determine a wireless service provider for the portable computing device after
receiving the identification information;

receive data from the portable computing device, wherein the data is received in a
wireless manner; and

provide the data received from the portable computing device to a destination
based on the determined wireless service provider.

132. (New) The carrier medium of claim 131, wherein the identification information includes a system ID (SID) of a possible plurality of SIDs wherein the possible of the possible plurality of wireless service providers.

133. (New) The carrier medium of claim 132, wherein the program instructions are further executable by the first access point to:

recognize a System ID (SID) of a plurality of possible SIDs, wherein each of the plurality of possible SIDs is associated with a respective one of the plurality of possible wireless service providers.

134. (New) The carrier medium of claim 133, wherein at least a subset of the SIDs each indicate one or more VLANs.

135. (New) The carrier medium of claim 133, wherein the program instructions are further executable by the first access point to:

determine at least one VLAN indicated by the recognized SID; and

transmit data received from the portable computing device to the network, wherein, in transmitting the data received from the portable computing device to the network, includes using the at least one VLAN.

136. (New) The carrier medium of claim 133, wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Service Set IDs (SSIDs).

137. (New) The carrier medium of claim 133, wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Basic Service Set IDs (BSSIDs).

138. (New) The carrier medium of claim 137, wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise at least one media access control (MAC) ID.

139. (New) The carrier medium of claim 137,
wherein the plurality of BSSIDs comprise a plurality of media access control (MAC) IDs; and

wherein a first MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs is different from a second MAC ID of the plurality of MAC IDs.

140. (New) The carrier medium of claim 137,
wherein a first BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs is different from a second BSSID of the plurality of BSSIDs.

141. (New) The carrier medium of claim 133,
wherein the plurality of SIDs comprises a plurality of IEEE 802.11 Extended Service Set IDs (ESSIDs).

142. (New) The carrier medium of claim 131, wherein the program instructions are further executable by the first access point to:
support IEEE 802.1p.

143. (New) A method for wireless network access in a network system, wherein the network system includes a plurality of access points coupled to a network, the method comprising:

a first access point of the plurality of access points receiving identification information from a portable computing device, wherein the identification information indicates a wireless service provider of a plurality of possible wireless service providers;

determining a wireless service provider for the portable computing device after receiving the identification information;

the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device; and

providing the data received from the portable computing device to a destination based on the determined wireless service provider;

wherein the first access point and the portable computing device communicate using wireless Ethernet (IEEE 802.11).

144. (New) A method for wireless network access in a network system, wherein the network system includes a plurality of access points coupled to a network, the method comprising:

a first access point of the plurality of access points receiving identification information from a portable computing device, wherein the identification information indicates a network destination of a plurality of possible network destinations;

determining a network destination after receiving the identification information;

the first access point receiving data from the portable computing device; and

providing the data received from the portable computing device to the destination;

wherein the first access point and the portable computing device communicate using wireless Ethernet (IEEE 802.11).

145. (New) The method of claim 144, wherein the first access point performs said determining.